

GILA NATIONAL FOREST



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fire and Smoking Restrictions in Effect on Gila National Forest

(Silver City, NM – May 12, 2006) - Stage I Fire and Smoking Restrictions are in effect on the Gila National Forest. Stage I is the first level of restrictions and limits the use of open campfires to designated campgrounds only. The list of campgrounds is listed within the official order 06-248, which is posted on the website at: <http://www2.srs.fs.fed.us/r3/gila/fire/forestclosure.asp>. Smoking is prohibited, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is cleared of flammable material.

Fire and smoking restrictions are effective in reducing the number of unwanted person-caused fires. Even during times of restrictions, however, there may still be opportunities for prescribed fires or wildland fire use events, where fire is managed for resource benefits. *"Understanding the needs of a fire-adapted ecosystem is essential. There are times when wildland fire can have positive end results. It's the careless person-caused fires, at the wrong time and the wrong place, that can have catastrophic effects. Those are the fires we must prevent,"* said Marcia Andre, Forest Supervisor.

Fire's natural role is sustained through careful planning and management. Timing is critical for prescribed fires, as a range of criteria must be met, including weather and fuel conditions, before ignitions can begin. The time is right for a 500-acre prescribed fire within the Indian Peaks project 50 miles northwest of Truth or Consequences, NM. *"Next Wednesday, we plan to hand-light an area that consists mostly of grass with some piñon juniper – it's within a larger treatment area and lands surrounding the parcel have already been treated,"* said Anthony James, Assistant District Fire Management Officer at Black Range, *"if we don't have any delays, we should have the project completed within a couple of days,"* he added.

To date, the Gila National Forest has treated about 20,000 acres with prescribed fire. Eleven wildfires have been reported and eight of those were person-caused, while three were natural ignitions, started by lightning.

For more information about the current fire activity, ***including ongoing prescribed fire projects***, on the Gila National Forest, contact the Information Office at 388-8245 or visit the website at www.fs.fed.us/r3/gila.

Information about all current federal and state land restrictions and closures in New Mexico and Arizona can be found by visiting the website:

http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/information/firerestrictions/restrictions_closures.htm

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